



The Case for Investing in a Bicycle/ Pedestrian/ Maintenance Pathway on the West Span of the Bay Bridge

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The Bay Bridge, opened to traffic in 1936, was a glorious engineering achievement. Unfortunately it was built with a major design flaw - no accommodation was made for bicycle and pedestrian traffic, such as on the popular twin pathways of the Golden Gate Bridge. Between 1936 and 1959, autos were limited to 6 lanes on the upper deck, with intercity and regional rail sharing the lower deck with truck traffic. Between 1959 and 1963, General Motors, other auto industry companies and local traffic engineers succeeded in eliminating the rails and opening up ten lanes to general automobile traffic, in line with a coordinated destruction of urban rail systems all around the Country.

Lately, the Bay Bridge has been making front-page news, as reports emerge of the massive cost overrun for the replacement East Span of the Bay Bridge, now estimated to cost a total of \$5 billion, or \$3.7 billion over initial Caltrans estimates. There has been discussion of raising bridge tolls to cover the shortfall; indeed the Governor and Southern Californian legislators are resistant to assisting the Bay Area with the shortfall. It appears that this has become a regional problem that will require a regional solution.

During the planning process for this unprecedented engineering project, a strong alliance of cycling, pedestrian, and environmental groups successfully lobbied for inclusion of a multi-use pathway that would also serve as emergency and maintenance access to the East Span. This pathway, however, will only extend from Oakland to Yerba Buena Island, not all the way to San Francisco.

Responding to public pressure to achieve shore-to-shore bicycle and pedestrian access, in 1999 Caltrans and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission hired a team led by the engineering firm CH2MHill to prepare a \$2 million feasibility study to look at adding a cantilever structure to the existing West Span. The study, released in May 2001, concludes that adding such a structure is feasible, and would provide many benefits to Caltrans and to the traveling public at large. The cost estimate for the lower cost, lightweight option, is estimated at \$160 million. There is currently no funding set aside for this project.

Proposal: Include the West Span Path in a Regional Gas Tax or Toll Increase

Bicycle/ Pedestrian access is not an amenity- it is an essential transportation facility and should be included as part of the current Bay Bridge projects. A cantilever bike/ pedestrian/ maintenance pathway on the West Span would:

- **Benefit the Traveling Public by:**
 - Providing bike/pedestrian access between the East Bay and SF
 - Cutting gridlock during peak hours by providing for a transportation alternative on the Bay Bridge (the only measure that would be made to increase capacity on the existing structure)
 - Relieving bicycle and passenger loads on BART and AC Transit
 - Reducing worker injuries and fatalities, and property damage (many collisions take place within construction zones) by allowing maintenance to be based on the pathway, eliminating the need for many lane closures
 - Reducing delays caused by lane closures for maintenance
 - Capitalizing on an investment already made to provide bike/ pedestrian access between Oakland and Yerba Buena Island
- **Provide financial benefits to the region:**
 - Reducing maintenance costs through more efficient labor utilization (\$263,000 each year according to the CH2Mhill report)
 - Reducing congestion
 - Reducing liability for injured Caltrans workers
- **Benefit emergency response efforts by:**
 - Providing a vital, alternative access route if BART is shut down due to natural disaster, terrorism, mechanical failure, or strike
 - Providing access for small emergency vehicles (Cushman-type)
 - Providing a safety refuge for motorists who break down
- **Benefit the Tourism Industry by:**
 - Providing unparalleled views of the San Francisco skyline and the Bay to pedestrians and cyclists
 - Completing a longstanding gap in the regional Bay Trail
 - Enhancing the Embarcadero Promenade
- **Enhance the redevelopment of the Embarcadero Promenade by:**
 - Providing an elevator to the deck of the Bay Bridge, and thus a new and unique tourist destination
 - Generating new life around the San Francisco footings of the Bay Bridge, currently a rather barren area.
- **Benefit residents of and visitors to Treasure Island by:**
 - Providing non-motorized access directly to the island, especially important as lifeline transport for the many low-income residents planned to inhabit affordable housing
 - Increase visits to Treasure Island by linking to the regional Bay Trail